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side margins of the absorbent composite between the body panels and overlap a portion of each body panel 4, 6. The length of the elastic elements is preferably between about 5% and 100% of the length of the absorbent composite. The function of the elastic elements in the side margins of the absorbent composite are to shorten the length of the side margin which pulls the side margins inwardly to form a three-dimensional profile. The elastic elements can be positioned at various laterally spaced positions, depending on the amount of shortening and upward lift desired. The elastic elements can be made of ribbon, films, sprays of elastic, or other elastic configurations known in the art. It should be understood that elastic elements can be incorporated into any of the other side margin configurations described herein.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please rewrite claims 2-46 as follows:

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2. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent composite comprises a first and second longitudinally opposed end regions, and wherein said body panel comprises a first body panel connected to said first end region and a second body panel connected to said second end region, wherein said first and second body panels each comprise terminal crotch edges that are longitudinally spaced apart, and wherein said at least said longitudinally extending location comprises at least one longitudinally extending first location and at least one longitudinally extending second location, wherein said absorbent composite is connected to said first body panel along said at least one longitudinally extending first location, and wherein said absorbent composite is connected to said second body panel along said at least one longitudinally extending second location, and wherein said side margin extends laterally outboard from each of said first and

second locations.

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3. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 2 wherein said first body panel comprises a first pair of side body panels and wherein said second body panel comprises a second pair of side body panels, wherein each of said side body panels comprises an outboard terminal edge and an inboard terminal edge, wherein said at least one first location comprises a pair of first locations and wherein said at least one second location comprises a pair of second locations, and wherein said inboard terminal edges of each of said first pair of side body panels is attached to said absorbent composite at one of said pairs of said first locations respectively and wherein said inboard terminal edge of each of said second pair of side body panels is attached to said absorbent composite at one of said pairs of said second locations, and wherein said absorbent composite comprises opposite side margins extending laterally outboard from each of said first and second locations.

4. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said side margin is formed from said backsheet.

5. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said side margin is formed from said topsheet.

6. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 5 wherein said side margin comprises a first portion of said topsheet folded over a second portion of said topsheet, wherein said folded first and second portions form a folded edge defining said free edge of said side margin.

7. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 6 wherein said side margin further comprises a portion of said backsheet disposed between said first and second

portions of said topsheet.

8. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said side margin is formed from said topsheet and said backsheet.

9. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said retention portion has opposite lateral side edges, and wherein side margin extends laterally outboard from one of said side edges of said retention portion.

10. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said side margin comprises a longitudinally extending elastic element.

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11. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said side margin of said absorbent composite comprises opposite side margins extending laterally outboard on each side of said absorbent composite and terminating in opposite free edges.

12. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said location is laterally spaced a first distance from said free edge at a first position and wherein said location is laterally spaced a second distance from said free edge at a second position, wherein said first distance is greater than said second distance and wherein said first and second positions are longitudinally spaced.

13. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 12 wherein said second position is closer to an end of said absorbent composite than said first position.

14. (Amended) An absorbent garment comprising:

longitudinally spaced first and second body panels each having a bodyside surface, a terminal waist edge and a terminal crotch edge, said terminal crotch

edges of said first and second body panels being longitudinally spaced; and

an absorbent composite having a longitudinally extending length, a laterally extending width and longitudinally opposed first and second end regions, said absorbent composite comprising a backsheet, a topsheet and a retention portion disposed between said backsheet and said topsheet, wherein said first end region of said absorbent composite is connected to said bodyside surface of said first body panel along at least one longitudinally extending first location and wherein said second end region of said absorbent composite is connected to said bodyside surface of said second body panel along at least one longitudinally extending second location, wherein said absorbent composite comprises a pair of laterally opposed side margins extending laterally outboard from each of said at least one first and second locations and terminating in opposite outboard free edges, wherein said side margins are not attached to said first and second body panels.

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15. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 14 wherein said first body panel comprises a first pair of side body panels and wherein said second body panel comprises a second pair of side body panels, wherein each of said side body panels comprises an outboard terminal edge and an inboard terminal edge, wherein said inboard terminal edge is connected to said absorbent composite.

16. (Twice Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 14 wherein said side margins are formed from said backsheet.

17. (Twice Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 14 wherein said side margins are formed from said topsheet.

18. (Twice Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 17 wherein each of said side margins comprises a first portion of said topsheet folded over a second portion of

said topsheet, wherein said folded first and second portions form a folded edge defining said free edge of said each of said side margins.

19. (Twice Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 18 wherein said each of said side margins further comprises a portion of said backsheet disposed between said first and second portions of said topsheet.

20. (Twice Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 14 wherein said side margins are formed from said topsheet and said backsheet.

21. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 14 wherein said retention portion has opposite lateral side edges, and wherein side margins extend laterally outboard from said side edges of said retention portion, respectively.

22. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 14 wherein said side margins each comprise a longitudinally extending elastic element.

23. (Twice Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 14 wherein each of said side margins has a first lateral width at a first position and a second lateral width at a second position, wherein said first and second positions are longitudinally spaced.

24. (Amended) A method of providing protection against bodily exudates with an absorbent garment comprising:

providing said absorbent garment comprising first and second body panels each having a bodyside surface, a terminal waist edge and a terminal crotch edge, said terminal crotch edges of said first and second body panels being longitudinally spaced and defining a space therebetween and an absorbent composite having a longitudinally extending length and a laterally extending width and comprising a

backsheet, a topsheet and a retention portion disposed between said backsheet and said topsheet, wherein said absorbent composite bridges said space between said terminal crotch edges and is connected to said bodyside surface of each of said first and second body panels along at least one longitudinally extending first and second location respectively, wherein said absorbent composite comprises laterally opposed side margins extending laterally outboard from at least one of said at least one first and second locations and each of said side margins terminating in a free edge, wherein said side margins are not attached to said respective first and second body panels; and

applying said absorbent garment to a body of a user.

25. (Amended) The method of claim 24 wherein at least said side margins of said absorbent composite have a bodyside surface and wherein at least a portion of said bodyside surface of said side margins is in contact with the body of the user.

26. (Amended) The method of claim 24 wherein said side margins are formed from said backsheet.

27. (Amended) The method of claim 24 wherein said side margins are formed from said topsheet.

28. (Amended) The method of claim 27 wherein each of said side margins comprises a first portion of said topsheet folded over a second portion of said topsheet, wherein said folded first and second portions form a folded edge defining said free edge of said side margin.

29. (Amended) The method of claim 28 wherein each of said side margins further comprises a portion of said backsheet disposed between said first and second

portions of said topsheet.

30. (Amended) The method of claim 24 wherein said side [margin is] margins are formed from said topsheet and said backsheet.

31. (Amended) The method of claim 24 wherein said retention portion has opposite lateral side edges, and wherein side margins extend laterally outboard from said side edges of said retention portion, respectively.

32. (Amended) The method of claim 24 wherein said side margins each comprise a longitudinally extending elastic element.

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33. (Twice Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent composite comprises an end region overlapping said body panel, and wherein said side margin extends along only a portion of said end region of said absorbent composite overlapping said body panel.

34. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 10 wherein said elastic element extends along only a portion of said length of said absorbent composite.

35. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 34 wherein said elastic element has a length between about 5% and about 100% of said length of said absorbent composite.

36. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 13 wherein said second distance is about zero.

37. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 36 wherein said side margin is

tapered from said second distance to said first distance between said second and first positions.

38. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 14 wherein said first and second end regions overlap said first and second body panels respectively, and wherein said side margins extend along only a portion of said first and second end regions of said absorbent composite overlapping said first and second body panels respectively.

39. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 14 wherein each of said first and second end regions comprise opposite corners, and wherein at least said opposite corners of said first and second end regions are connected to said first and second body panels respectively.

C1 40. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 22 wherein each of said elastic elements extends along only a portion of said length of said absorbent composite.

41. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 40 wherein each of said elastic elements has a length between about 5% and about 100% of said length of said absorbent composite.

42. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 23 wherein said second lateral width is about zero at said second position.

43. (Twice Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 24 wherein said absorbent composite comprises an end region overlapping said body panel, and wherein said side margins extend along only a portion of said end region of said absorbent composite overlapping said body panel.

44. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 32 wherein each of said elastic elements extends along only a portion of said length of said absorbent composite.

45. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 44 wherein each of said elastic elements has a length between about 5% and about 100% of said length of said absorbent composite.

46. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 24 wherein said absorbent composite comprises at least a pair of opposite corners connected to said bodyside surface of said body panel.

IN THE DRAWINGS:

Various figures have been amended to correct various informalities noted by the Examiner. The changes are noted in red ink on the drawings sheets enclosed herewith. Applicants note that in Figure 5, line 32 properly references an ear portion (page 6, line 2). Applicants further note that the Figure 18 does not shown a line of attachment, such that the relative width of the side margins in Figures 18 and 19 cannot be determined or compared.

REMARKS

In an Office Action mailed April 1, 2003, the Examiner made various objections to the specification, including the drawings, and claims. Applicants have amended the specification, including the drawings, and various claims as set forth above to overcome the noted objections. The Examiner also rejected claims 2, 11 and 25 under 35 USC 112(2) as being indefinite. Applicants have amended those claims to overcome the Examiner's rejection as set forth above. Finally, Applicants have amended claims 2 and 14 to clarify that the first and second body panels are discreet components with terminal waist edges and longitudinally spaced terminal crotch edges. None of these amendments added new matter or narrowed the scope of the claims. A marked-up version of the specification and claims showing the